



Harbinger

SPRINGFIELD CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER VOL. 18 NO. 3

The phones at the Nature Center begin to ring this time of year with questions and stories that often go like this: "I found a baby bird on the ground under a bush that fell out of its nest. The mother wasn't around anywhere! I've been watching from the window for an hour, and I am sure the mother is dead or has abandoned this baby. What should I do?" Spring is the time of year when we begin to receive many calls about young "abandoned" or "orphaned" wildlife. But there are several reasons why it is usually best for humans to leave wildlife babies alone.

First of all, the seemingly abandoned wildlife are usually not abandoned at all. For instance, as young birds fledge (leave their nests) it is common for them to be left alone for long periods of time as the parents forage for food. The young will often find a bush or other cover to stay under until their parents return to care for them. Also, if there is a person or other perceived danger around, the parents will not draw attention to the location of their young and won't go near them until they feel it is safe. A human hovering over a baby bird can delay parental care.

However, human intervention could help when a baby bird has fallen out of a nest and is obviously too young to be fledging. In this case, gently picking up the baby and replacing it in its nest is the best course of action. It is a myth that human scent will cause the parents to reject their baby. If a nest cannot be found, a makeshift nest can be made by placing a paper towel-lined berry basket or a butter tub in a

nearby tree and securing it with duct tape.

We receive many calls about other "abandoned" babies as well, such as squirrels and even deer. People may see a young squirrel at the base of a tree that appears helpless. However, young squirrels that have fallen out of a tree are usually recovered by their parent, who will pick them

up by the nape of the neck in the same way that a mother cat carries her kittens and return them to the nest. People also may spot a young deer whose mother is nowhere to be seen and assume the mother is dead. It is not uncommon, however, for a mother deer to place her fawn in the grass where its camouflage, instinct to remain still, and lack of scent help to keep it safe from predators. Mother deer may forage for many hours before returning to nurse their fawns.

Another reason to leave wildlife babies alone is because humans are bad parental substitutes for wildlife parents. When people try to help by raising young wildlife they assume to be orphaned, they unwittingly are doing the opposite of their good intentions. Most people do not know the special

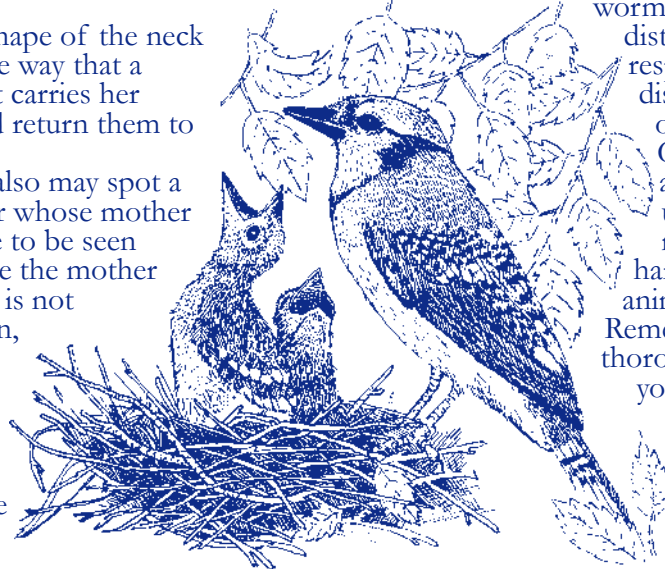
dietary requirements of different animals and they also cannot teach the skills of survival that young wildlife need to learn from their parents. Even if a hand-fed young animal should live to an age where it could be released back into the wild, chances are it will not survive for very long.

Wild animals can also be carriers of pests and diseases, some that can be transferred to humans or family pets. They may have mites, ticks, lice, fleas, roundworms, rabies, distemper, respiratory diseases, or mange. Care should always be used if one must handle a wild animal baby. Remember to thoroughly wash your hands after handling wildlife for any reason.

Finally, it is illegal to possess most wild animals without a valid state or federal permit. To find out more about these regulations, you may check the Wildlife Code of Missouri handbook or contact one of the local MDC offices.

So the next time you see a baby animal that seems to be orphaned or abandoned, resist the urge to try to take care of it. More often than not, you'll be doing yourself and the wild animal a favor by just leaving it alone.

BABY ANIMALS... LET THEM BE!



Chipping In . . . Emily and Tom Mortimer

What do comic books and the Crocodile Hunter have in common? If you were at our Halloween Happening night hike last October, you might know the answer. Those in attendance were led along the trail by a silly comic book kid who was seeking answers to a school project. The Crocodile Hunter came to the rescue and helped solve the questions. These two characters were *supposed* to be acting, but they did such a wonderful job playing off each other that it wasn't obvious if they were really acting or just being themselves. These characters were played by Volunteer Naturalists Emily Mortimer (a.k.a.

Comic Book Kid) and Tom Mortimer (a.k.a. the Crocodile Hunter).

If you missed their act during October, then you can still see Emily and Tom in action at the nature center on Sundays when they are caring for the captive animals. Emily and Tom first started volunteering in 2000 and have come in nearly every Sunday afternoon since to feed our captive animals and clean their cages. They have helped maintain cages and fed everything from snakes, turtles, frogs, newts, and salamanders to black widow spiders, caterpillars, and a giant red-headed centipede. You may also find them interacting with the general

public with a non-venomous snake in hand (the *only* way the Crocodile Hunter would have it). It may sound like a scene from *Animal Planet*, but teaching visitors about Missouri's native snakes is what they enjoy.

They thrive on the excitement and thrills received by bringing people and wildlife closer together. This has led them further to find employment with part-time jobs at Dickerson Park Zoo helping with animal care and to be docents for the zoo. As docents (volunteer teachers), they are qualified to handle birds of prey so they can share their passion for wildlife with others through the programs they present. They have given owl programs and have handled different owl species during these presentations. Their experience with animal care is complimented by their choice in education. Emily is a student at SMSU and will be graduating this spring with a degree in Wildlife Biology, while Tom graduated last year with a degree in Biology from SMSU.

Their passion for wildlife and penchant for drama are two of the many things they share. They enjoy the company of each other so much that on June 14, 2003, they exchanged marriage vows. The next time you see Emily and Tom taking care of the captive animals, showing a live snake or owl, or "acting" out a character, please be sure to thank them for chipping in.

Thank you . . .

We would like to thank Leslie Tuttle, Spencer Rust and Jay Wood for donating various natural objects; Jim Landewe for the bluebird houses and bird feeder; and Wilson's Creek National Battlefield and Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World for the loan of various items for our Lewis and Clark Survivor Family Fun Night. And thank you readers of *417 Magazine* for voting the nature center as the "best place to take a hike" in the magazine's annual "Best Of" awards.

The View From The Bridge

If you're reading this, then you are probably one of the faithful folks who visit the nature center regularly and attend programs. You already know a lot about who we are and what we offer in terms of conservation education. There are many visitors, however, who haven't been inside the nature center building in years, and some who'll admit that they didn't even know that programs are offered. They just enjoy the trails.

Many of these trail walkers are very dedicated and may be seen on the trails daily, or as often as they can. They see the changing seasons, notice the blooming wildflowers, and may wonder what bird they hear calling, but they often don't have time to investigate an answer to their queries because they're in a hurry. The purpose for their hikes is twofold, enjoying the outdoors and getting a recreational workout in a short amount of time.

New Volunteer Naturalist Kimberly Duquette has come up with a guided hike to meet the needs of some of our recreational hikers while helping us meet our mission of helping people connect with nature and learn to conserve it, too. You might say the purpose of her hike is also twofold. Every Wednesday, beginning in May, you can join her for a fast-paced walk during the lunch hour that is appropriately titled **Walkie Talkies**. Hikes will begin promptly at **12:10** and end by **12:50** to allow travel time. Here is additional information:

If you have your lunch hour free and enjoy taking recreational walks, then this is the hike for you. Volunteer Naturalist Kimberly Duquette combines exercise and a conservation message in this fast-paced hike that stretches your legs *and* your brain! Bring water. Adults only. No registration required. (Please don't bring food on the hike, but feel free to eat your lunch at the pavilion before or after your walk.) Hikes will be offered on Wednesday, May 5, 12, 19, & 26 and then again in June on Wednesday, June 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30.

So, mark your calendars for Wednesdays and plan to join Kimberly. You might just exercise your brain and your legs at the same time. Now that's what I call a workout!



Linda F. Chorice
Nature Center Manager

Volunteer Milestones

Sandy Corby	2000 Hours
Dan Liles	400 Hours
Shane Thomas	100 Hours



May Events at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center

For programs requiring registration, call 888-4237.

Registration for all programs begins the first day of the month.

5 Warbler Walk Wednesday, 8:30-11:30am

Join Volunteer Naturalists Charley Burwick and Mary Murphy to learn about these “butterflies of the bird world.” Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Ages 12-adult. *Registration begins April 15.*

Walkie Talks Every Wednesday in May! 12:10-12:50pm

[See *View From The Bridge* article]

Lewis & Clark: Animal Drawings Wednesday, 7-8:30pm

Part of Lewis & Clark's mission was to bring back drawings of the 122 new animals they were credited with “discovering.” Art instructor Jayne Meadows shares techniques on how to make accurate animal drawings. Ages 12-adult. *Registration begins April 15.*

6 Lewis & Clark: Botanical Drawings Thursday, 7-8:30pm

Lewis & Clark were charged with making accurate drawings of the 178 plants they were credited with “discovering.” Art instructor Sandi Baker shares techniques on how to record details in your own botanical drawings. Ages 12-adult. *Registration begins April 15.*

8 Hiking Club Saturday, 8am-5pm

While most people are trout fishing at Roaring River State Park, Volunteer Naturalist Mike Mihalik will lead a wildflower hike. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Pack a sack lunch, bring water, and wear sturdy, comfortable shoes. Hike is five miles. Ages 18-adult. *Registration required.*

Conservation TEEN Club

Beaver Creek Float Trip Saturday, 9am-5pm

Beaver Creek has long been a favorite of fishermen, but it's also a good stream for canoeing. We'll spend the day enjoying the sights and sounds along this typical Ozarks waterway. Lunch and transportation will be provided. Ages 12-17. *Registration required.*

Babes In The Woods Celebrates Mothers Saturday, 11-11:45am

Mothers, we celebrate you during the month of May (and always). Bring your children, ages 0-2, for a guided nature walk. Bring a stroller and join the fun! *Registration required.*

8 Gouge Chippers Saturday, 1-4pm

Stop by anytime to watch how woodcarvers from the Gouge Chippers combine woodcarving skills and artistic talent to produce works of art.

John Nilsen In Concert Saturday, 7-8pm

Contemporary composer and recording artist John Nilsen returns for another solo piano performance. His music, which includes fourteen CDs, is known for its original melodic themes—pieces which touch on the experiences of our lives. His music inspires us to look more carefully, to feel more deeply, and to celebrate this life of ours. Ages 12-adult. *Registration required.*

9 Searching For Wildlife Sunday, 3-4:30pm

For families with deaf and/or hearing-impaired members. Please note that this program will be presented in sign language only. Come join the fun as Naturalist Sheri Medlock takes participants on a search for wildlife. Participants will follow the trail through the woods and look for wildlife clues. Families. *Registration required.*

Babes In The Woods Celebrates Mothers Sunday, 4-4:45pm

[Same as May 8]

12 Story Time With Ms. Ladybug Wednesday, 11-11:30am

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story. Ages 2-6.

14 Nature Investigators Wetlands, What Are They? Friday, 4-5pm

Beginning this month, Volunteer Naturalist Larry Stuart wades into a summer series on wetlands. Join him as he investigates wetland basics and discover why these natural areas need to be protected. Ages 7-12. *Registration required.*

15 Super Scout Saturday Saturday, 10am-4pm

Attention: Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors; Tigers, Wolves, Bears, and Webelos; Camp Fire USA; and Royal Rangers. Here's an opportunity for the groups listed above to have fun learning while earning nature-oriented badges. Call or stop by the nature center for more information.

16 Primitive Skills Series Flint Knapping Demonstration Sunday, 1-3pm

Volunteer Specialist Don Brink returns for another primitive skills session. Watch him transform simple rocks into artistic and functional points similar to the ones used by early man for arrowheads and other tools. See the basics of flint knapping and try your hand at this age-old skill. Stop by anytime.

19 Babes In The Woods And Blooms, Too

Wednesday, 11-11:45am or 6-6:45pm

Don't forget to stop and smell the wildflowers. Bring your little ones, ages 0-2, for a stroller walk to meet up with some of the flowers and fragrances of May. *Registration required.*

20 For Adults Only Let's Go Fishing Thursday, 6-9pm

Here's your chance to get hooked on fishing. We'll meet at a nearby pond for catch-and-release fishing. Bring your fishing license, drinking water, and your lucky hat. Fishing equipment and bait will be provided. Receive directions when registering. Ages 18-adult. *Registration required.*

22 Sweet Songs From Missouri Woodlands Saturday, 2-4pm

Stop by to enjoy dulcimer melodies performed by Paul M. Harvey and to learn about various wood products made from native Missouri trees.

23 Gouge Chippers Sunday, 1-4pm

[Same as May 8]

Summer Hummers Sunday, 5-6:30pm

Hummingbirds have returned to the Ozarks! Join bird bander Sarah Driver as she talks about hummingbirds and attempts to capture and band some. Families. *Registration required.*

25 Conservation Kids' Club The Game Of Life Tuesday, 6:30-7:45pm

From birth to death, survival is a “gamble” for wildlife. Join us this month and discover the daily “jeopardy” that young wildlife experience. Ages 7-12 only. (Please, only one adult per group of kids.) *Registration required.*



June Events at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center

For programs requiring registration, call 888-4237.

Registration for all programs begins the first day of the month.

2 Walkie Talkies Every Wednesday in June! 12:10-12:50pm

[See *View From The Bridge* article]

5 For Adults Only Beaver Creek Float Trip Saturday, 8:30am-5pm

If you're a first-time or novice canoeist, this is a great chance "to get your feet wet." Come enjoy one of the best recreational pastimes the Ozarks has to offer. Cost of canoes will be approximately \$17 per person. Call for additional details. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

6 Primitive Skills Series Fire And Flintstone Sunday, 1-3pm

Volunteer Specialist Don Brink returns to demonstrate how to start fires without matches or butane. Afterwards, try your hand at starting a fire the primitive way. Ages 12-adult. Registration required.

9 Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

Wednesday, 11-11:30am

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story. Ages 2-6.

11 Nature Investigators Who Lives In A Wetland? Friday, 4-5pm

Join Volunteer Naturalist Larry Stuart for another look at wetlands. We will investigate which animals and insects call wetlands home. Ages 7-12. Registration required.

12 Hiking Club Saturday, 8am-5pm

A goal of the Hiking Club is to explore and hike different areas that we haven't visited. Join Volunteer Naturalist Sally Inskeep as she leads you on hikes at Fort Crowder and Bicentennial Conservation Areas. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

Hike-And-Seek Trail Hike Saturday, 10am-Noon

Spend a morning exploring a section of the Ozark Greenways Galloway Trail. Meet at the nature center and play hike-and-seek as you hike three miles to Sequiota Park. Answer nature-related questions along the way to earn prizes. Refreshments will be available at Sequiota Park. Families

18 Nature Journaling Lewis & Clark Style Friday, 10am-Noon

Discover the art of nature journaling and learn how to "etch" an outdoor experience in your mind by sketching and writing about your explorations—just like Lewis & Clark! No prior art or writing experience is necessary, just an interest in and a curiosity about the outdoors. Ages 10-adult. Registration required.

Conservation TEEN Club Bat Research Trip Overnight

Friday, Noon to Saturday, Noon

Don't miss this opportunity to observe ongoing field research. Dr. Lynn Robbins, mammalogy professor at SMSU, will be capturing, tagging, and tracking local bats. After late-night observations, we'll spend the night indoors at the nearby SMSU Bull Shoals field station. Ages 12-17. Registration required.

Nature Investigators Wetland Food Chains Friday, 4-5pm

Come investigate who is eating whom in this in-depth summer series on wetlands. Volunteer Naturalist Larry Stuart will trace wetland food chains from the sun to the eagle. Ages 7-12. Registration required.

19 Nature Journaling Lewis & Clark Style Saturday, 10am-Noon

[Same as June 18]
Babes In The Woods Celebrates Fathers
Saturday, 11-11:45am

Fathers (and other favorite Big People), celebrate your special day with your children, ages 0-2, on a guided nature stroll. Bring a stroller and enjoy some special time outside with your babies! Registration required.

Scat Facts

Saturday, 3-4:30pm

For families with deaf and/or hearing-impaired members. Please note that this program will be presented in sign language only. A lot can be learned from what animals leave behind! Join Naturalist Sheri Medlock for an engaging inquiry into the world of animal scat followed by a walk in the woods in search of the real thing. Families. Registration required.

22 Babes In The Woods Celebrates Summer Tuesday, 10-10:45am

Summer breezes make us feel fine as we go on a guided nature stroll to introduce you and your favorite 0-2 year old to the sweet days of summer. Bring a stroller. Registration required.

24 Hiking Club Thursday, 6-9pm

Enjoy an evening stroll with Volunteer Naturalist Doug Gilliam at Ritter Spring Park. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Hike is three miles. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

Firefly Frolic Thursday, 8-9pm

Fireflies have intrigued and fascinated children and adults on countless summer evenings. Join Volunteer Naturalist Nancy Ryan to learn everything you ever wanted to know about nature's "flash-lights." Bring *your* flashlight and join the fun. Families. Registration required.

26 Snakes: Friend or Foe? Saturday, 2-3pm

Whether you like or dislike snakes you will find yourself entranced by their lifestyles. Join Volunteer Naturalist Shane Thomas for an in-depth look at Missouri's common snakes and get an up close and personal encounter with these amazing yet misunderstood reptiles. Ages 7-adult. Registration required.

27 Summer Hummers Sunday, 5-6:30pm

Although hummingbirds may be a bit busy and out of sight during their current mating and nesting season, you can still enjoy an evening with Sarah Driver as she shares her knowledge about Missouri's smallest bird and attempts to capture and band some. Families. Registration required.

29 Conservation Kids' Club Firefly Fest Tuesday, 7-8:30pm

Those tiny specks of light that spark our imagination every summer are back! Bring your flashlight for some games and join the action for a special look at nature's own "festival of lights." Ages 7-12 only. (Please, only one adult per group of kids.) Registration required.

Movies are shown each Sunday from 2 to 3pm

May 1 and June 5

HIKED IT . . . LIKED IT!

Enjoy a naturalist-guided hike for families on the first Saturday of each month from 9 to 11am.



Little Acorns . . .

Little Acorns programs are for children 3-6 years and are 45-minutes in length. Please limit **Little Acorns** programs to one per month. Registration begins the first day of the month.

May

Beautiful Blooms

From seed to sensational; flowers are fun! Join the adventure as we discover the power of the flower.

Saturday, May 8, 1pm or 4pm

Thursday, May 27, 1pm or 6pm

Hail The Snail And Hug A Slug

Volunteer Naturalist Nancy Ryan returns to shell out a slug of facts about these creatures known for their silvery, slimy trails.

Friday, May 28, 11am or 1pm

Other Mothers

Celebrate wild motherhood and learn about the special and important roles wild mothers play in nature.

Thursday, May 13, 10am or 1pm

Sunday, May 16, 2pm

June

Bigmouth Bullfrogs

From tadpoles to adult bullfrogs, we'll learn the life changes that frogs go through and why they are such good leapers.

Tuesday, June 8, 10am or 1pm

Saturday, June 12, 10am or 1pm

Nature's Nightlights

Summer evenings will be filled with more than just magic and fun for your little ones when they discover fireflies with Volunteer Naturalist Nancy Ryan.

Thursday, June 10, 11am or 1pm

Tick Talk

Here's a great way for preschoolers to learn about some of the hazards we all must face when we're outdoors enjoying a Missouri summer.

Friday, June 18, 10am or 1pm or 4pm

Tree Pest Clinics at the Nature Center

May 18 and June 22, 10am to 1pm

Do your trees have disease or insect problems? Bring infected twigs (at least 15" long), branches, or leaves to Urban Foresters for identification and a solution to your tree problems. Stop by anytime.



Missouri's Outdoor Women June 11-13, 2004

The Windermere Conference Center, Lake of the Ozarks



It's time to go outside and have some fun! If you've been hesitant about "getting your feet wet" outdoors or interested in finding ways to improve certain outdoor skills, Missouri's Outdoor Women program has an event that will exceed your needs and expectations in a safe, fun, and beautiful location and with some of the best instructors in the state! Contact Regina Knauer at 417/895-6881, ext. 1068/e-mail Regina.Knauer@mdc.mo.gov or Nickie Phillips at 573/522-4115, ext. 3292/e-mail Nickie.Phillips@mdc.mo.gov for more information or a registration form. Application deadline is May 14.

Story Time at the Nature Center

Angelina and Henry

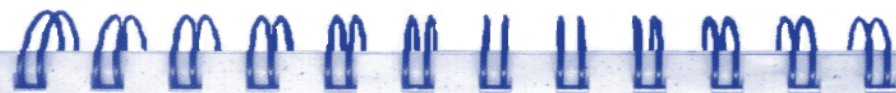
Saturday, June 19, 2-3pm

Come to the nature center and listen as The Library Center staff reads the story *Angelina and Henry*. Angelina Ballerina replaces her ballet slippers with hiking boots. Enjoy making a craft and going on a scavenger hunt. Ages 3-8.



Call The Library Center to register at 874-8110, Ext. 117.

The bookmobile will be camped out at the nature center from 1-3:30pm so bring your library card.



Harbinger Highlights . . .

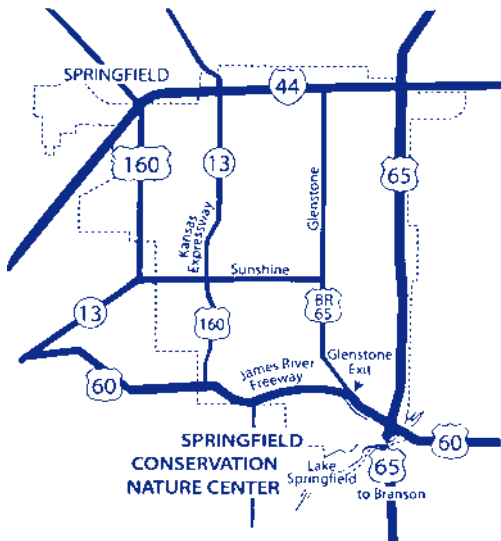
Defined, harbinger (pronounced här'bīn-jər) is anything that fore-shadows a future event; omen; sign. With the arrival of spring we celebrate the return of several migratory birds that will remain with us through the summer. Keep your eyes and ears open to see and hear the beauty of the following harbingers of spring.

Listen for the rapid chant, "witchity-witchity-witchity-witch" of the Common Yellowthroat, a small (4½ to 5½ inch) warbler that can be found in shrubs and brush usually near water. Look for olive-brown wings, back and tail; a yellow throat; and a white belly. Males have a black mask.



When walking through the forest, listen for the distinctive call of the Eastern Pewee: "pee-a-wee", slurring down and then up. Watch carefully for this gray-brown, sparrow-sized bird with two narrow white wing bars.

The "zweet zweet zweet zweet zweet zweet" song (all on one pitch) of the Prothonotary Warbler can be heard in wooded areas near water. The males have deep yellow heads and breasts. The wings and tails are a blue-gray color and the backs are olive. The females are less colorful.



HOURS—The area is open daily 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. from March 1 to October 31, and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the remainder of the year. The building is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. year 'round. The building and area are closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. The area is closed to pets, bicycles, roller blades, hunting, fishing, collecting, and alcoholic beverages. No fees are charged.



The Nature Nook Gift Shop . . .

The gift shop's featured special will be *Fiddles And Forests*. This 2-disk set retails for \$10 but will be 20% off in May and June (no other discounts apply).

Temporary Display . . . May/June
Outdoor Writers Association of America
Nikon Traveling Photo Exhibit



Kids' Fishing Fun Day

Saturday, June 5, 8am-2pm

Sportsman's Park (2500 E. Kearney)

Kids love fishing! And here's a great chance for your child to have fun while learning more about fishing. Children, ages 3 to 13, will get the opportunity to fish in a specially stocked pond. Participants need to bring their own equipment and bait. **Preregister for a fishing time** at either Bass Pro Shops, Springfield/Greene County Park Board, or the nature center. All children must be accompanied by an adult. For kids that participate, family fishing time will be from Noon to 2pm (adults must have a valid fishing license).

Kids' Fishing Day

May 1, 6:30am-8:15pm

**Roaring River Hatchery
& State Park**

Call 417/847-2430 for details

Kids' Fishing Day

May 15, 6:30am-8:15pm

**Bennett Spring Hatchery
& State Park**

Call 417/532-4418 for details

Family Fishing Fair

June 12, 10am-2pm

**Shepherd of the Hills
Fish Hatchery**

Call 417/334-4865 for details

Free Fishing Weekend: June 12-13

<<http://www.MissouriConservation.com>>

Springfield Conservation Nature Center
Missouri Department of Conservation
4600 South Chrisman
Springfield, MO 65804-4931
Phone 417/888-4237
Fax: 417/888-4241



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